



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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Lampert, R. J. "Burrill Lake and Currarong: Coastal Sites in Southern New South Wales", Terra Australis, Volume I. Department of Prehistory, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 1971. ix + 86 pages, tables, figures, plates, three appendices, bibliography. Price: \$A4.00.

Reviewed by Peter Bellwood

Archaeological research in the Pacific and Australian area is growing at an ever increasing rate, and it is heartening to see that several institutions have recently adopted a policy of publishing reports and theses in inexpensive formats. The Bishop Museum, the University of Hawaii, and the University of Otago have each established such a series, and the Department of Prehistory in the Research School of Pacific Studies at Australian National University has now founded its own series, called Terra Australis, of which volume I is reviewed here.

Terra Australis volumes are planned to cover research, mainly in Australia, New Guinea and Island Melanesia, conducted by the staff and students of the above department, under the general guidance of Professor Jack Golson. Volume 2, now in preparation, will be on excavations carried out by J. P. White in the New Guinea Highlands, and future volumes are planned on research in Tonga and the Solomon Islands. The department now has an impressive list of Ph.D. theses to its credit and, while these have been difficult for overseas scholars to obtain in the past, the present series should obviate such problems in future.

The first volume of Terra Australis is attractively produced, and bears a reproduction of Tasman's well-known chart of Australasian coastlines on the front cover. Tables, figures and plates are amply provided, and reproduction is excellent. In this volume, R. J. Lampert reports on excavations at four rock-shelters on the New South Wales Coast south of Sydney: one at Burrill Lake which has a series of artefact-bearing levels dating back some 20,000 years, and three at Currarong, which are dated to within the past 4,000 years. At Burrill Lake, the lower levels produced a small number of flake and core scrapers of the widespread early Australian type, while after c.3,000 B.C. a number of new tool forms appeared, including those referred to by Australian archaeologists as bondi points, eloueras,

and fabricators - in general, an industry characterised by blade production, which appears widely in southern and eastern Australia after c.5,000 B.C. and which may be distantly related to blade industries of similar date in eastern Indonesia and the Philippines. These new tool forms characterise the lower levels of the Currarong sites, which do not extend back into the earlier period represented at Burrill Lake. Finally, the topmost levels of the Currarong sites and Burrill Lake show an increasing number of fabricators, and Lampert discusses the possible significance of these tools in some detail.

Economically, little has survived from the lower deposits at Burrill Lake, but the most recent inhabitants appear to have exploited mostly localised resources, while the inhabitants of the Currarong sites seem to have exploited a wider range of environments. Lampert reveals the information from the sites in its true perspective by comparing the industrial sequence with that from other Australian sites, and by comparing the economic evidence with observations contained in early reports of Aboriginal life in the area. In general, this report may be viewed as a basic contribution to Australian prehistory. As a non-Australian archaeologist, my only criticism would be whether the use of shell weights (described on page 59) for quantitative purposes of midden analysis is of very much use, my own view being that shell number, or preferably meat weight, are much more meaningful statistics.

Terra Australis is destined to fulfil a real need in Australian and Pacific prehistory, namely the dissemination of fully documented information. Professor Golson and his editorial board are to be congratulated for their initiative in planning this series.